

A
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To the Reverend

Dr. *FRANCIS HARE*,

Dean of WORCESTER,

Occasion'd by his Reflections on the

DISSENTERS.

In his Late

VISITATION SERMON

AND

POSTSCRIPT.

By DANIEL NEAL. K.

L O N D O N :

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ADVERTISEMENT.
THE References to the Dean of
WORCESTER'S Sermon, are
according to the fourth Edition.

By DANIEL NEALE.

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A
LETTER

To the Reverend

Dr. H A R E.

Reverend SIR,



I S not the Design of this Address to offer any thing against the Argument of your Sermon or Postscript, any farther than is necessary to vindicate the *Protestant Dissenters* from the unkind Reflections You have cast upon them: I shall leave the Cause of CHURCH AUTHORITY in the Hands of the Lord Bp. of *Bangor*, and your own, not doubting but the World will receive some new Light from your Labours: Let me only desire, that when you reply to his Lordship, You would write with a little more Temper than appears in your *Postscript*; for angry Words, and a So-

vereign Contempt of one's Adversary will prejudice the best Cause in the World. 'Twas below the Dean of *Worcester* to tell the World that his " Lordship had not been his *Primary* Visitation. " That Your Sermon had disturbed his Lordship's Thoughts for seven Months---- that " you can bear to be treated as a Fool, but " not to be represented as a Knave,----to talk of " returning his Lordship his *Bearskin &c.*" Such Flowers as these discover the Temper of the Writer, but do no Service to his Cause. Surely Clergymen, and Men of Learning, should treat each other with more Decency and Respect!

No Body is surpriz'd at the low Artifices of the Younger Clergy; many of whom have nothing else to recommend them to their Superiors but an unmanly way of Triumphant over the *Dissenters* in the Pulpit, even before they have so much as look'd into their Controversy: Accordingly they dress up their Adversaries in a ridiculous Habit, and having bestowed plenty of Invectives upon them, turn them loose to their incensed Auditories; an *Anathema* from such a Quarter as this deserves no Regard: But when a Gentleman of your great Learning, and high Station in the Church shall give Judgment against the whole Body of *Protestant Dissenters* without Distinction; and tell the World they are all insincere and inexcusable before God; You must pardon us, if we are not silent under so heavy a Charge.

But

But before I examine the several Passages in your Sermon and Postscript that relate to the Dissenters, allow me to consider a little the general Principle on which you proceed. You admit (P. 35.) "that the H. Scriptures are the Rule of our Faith, not the Sound of the Words, but the Sense of them." You then proceed to enquire, how we shall certainly know the true Sense of the Scriptures, and who has a Right to Interpret them with that Authority that his Interpretations OUGHT to be submitted to? You answer (P. 37) "Not a single Pastor by his mere Authority, but in every Church the Governors of it, assisted by the best Lights they can get, and with a particular Regard to the Sense of the Primitive Church where it can be had". But it does not appear from anything you have said in your Sermon, that our Saviour or his Apostles have empowered any number of Men to Interpret Scripture for others, with that Authority that their Interpretations *ought* to be submitted to, Much less does it appear, that They have given this Power to the Governours of EVERY Church, whether they are qualified for their Office, or rightly invested in it or not; For by this Argument the Governors of the Churches of *Geneva*, *Rome*, and *Moscow* have an equal Right to oblige their People to submit to their several Creeds with the Church of *England* herself.

You

You are pleas'd indeed to acquaint us (P. 23.) who are the RIGHTFUL Governors of the Christian Church, and who not. "The RIGHTFUL Governors of the Church are not the
 " the Presbyters taken singly, which leads (say
 " you) to the wild and ridiculous Scheme of the
 " Independents. " A Scheme which I am satisfied, Sir, you have not condescended in the least to look into: " Nor Presbyters acting together
 " without a Bishop to preside over them; for
 " this is a Notion unknown to all Antiquity;
 " but the RIGHTFUL Governors of the
 " Church are an Ecclesiastical Consistory of Presbyters with their Bishop at their Head. " Now taking all this for granted, what an Argument have you put into the Mouths of the Dissenters to justify their Separation from the present Establishment. For is there any thing like this to be found there? Is the Church of *England* govern'd by a Bishop and his Presbyters Or not rather by the Civil Magistrate? Is not the KING the Fountain of all Ecclesiastical Authority? And has he not Power to make Ordinances which shall bind the Clergy without their Consent, under the Penalty of a *Premunire*? Does not his Majesty nominate the Bishops, summon Convocations, and Prorogue them at Pleasure? When the Convocations of *Canterbury* and *York* are assembled, can they debate upon any Subject without the King's License? Or make any Canons that can bind the People without an Act of Parliament? The Bishops in their several Courts can determine nothing in a Judicial Manner about the Faith,
 there

there lying an Appeal from them to the King, who decides it by his Commissioners in the Court of Delegates. Now tho' this may be a Wise and Prudent Institution, yet it can lay no claim to Antiquity, because the civil Magistrate was not Christian for 300 Years after our Saviour; and consequently the Dissenters who are for reducing Religion to the Standard of the *Bible* can be under no Obligation to conform to it; we have a Divine Precept to oblige us to do whatsoever *Christ* and his *Apostles* have commanded us; but I find no Passage of Scripture that obliges us to be of the Religion of the State we happen to be born in. If there be any such Obligation on the *English* Dissenters, it must arise only from the *Laws* of their Country, which can have no Influence upon them! at present, those *Laws* having been long since suspended by the Act of Indulgence.

I am not so vain as to Imagine that the Dean of *Worcester* is to be moved out of his warm Preferments in the Church of *England* by any thing I can say; but let me ask upon this occasion, Whether the Church does not lament the Loss of *Primitive Discipline*, and pray on the first Day of every *Lent* for its being Restored? Whether it be not the Duty of all Christians, but more especially of the *Guides* of the People, who know what the Primitive Discipline is, to revive it, when they have the Magistrate's Leave, as far as is consistent with his Prerogative? The Magistrate indeed, says very justly; If you will enjoy the Temporal Advantages which I have annexed

annexed to the *Office* of teaching the People. You shall accept them on my Terms, but renounce these, and You may be as *Primitive* as You please; if such learned Men as You, will content your selves with a single *Wish* for *Primitive Discipline*, once a Year, we must despair for ever of seeing it restored, and shall be forc'd to conclude that You are influenc'd more by the Motives of this World, than by a Zeal for *Primitive Institutions*.

But 'tis of no great Importance with You, who are the *RIGHTFUL* Governors of the Church, for *You say** the Governors of *EVERY* Church that is of *Rome*, of *Geneva*, of *Moscow* as well as of *England*, whether they be Spiritual Persons or Temporal; qualified or unqualified for their Places; legally or illegally invested in them; If they are but Governors *de Facto*, they have a *RIGHT* to interpret Scripture for the People, with that Authority that their Interpretations *ought* to be submitted to. By this Rule the People of *England* must be obliged by the Laws of God to believe as the Parliament believes; to receive their *Determinations* absolutely and without examination, as *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, tho' they were carried by the Majority but of a single Vote, or it may be by a *Proxy*, who was never present at any Part of the Debate. This I confess is a compendious way of being Orthodox: *Obey Your Governors be they who they will, and presume them to be in the right; don't disturb your Minds about the*

the Truth or Falshood of their Decrees, but wink hard and believe them and you are safe. Had You lodged this Power in the Hands of the RIGHTFUL Successors of the Apostles, You had been consistent with your self; but to tell us (p. 23) that the Persons Invested with Church Authority, are the *Bishop* and his *Presbyters*; and (p. 37.) that they were *any Body*, or *every Body* that happen to be in Power, was putting a little too much on the Understandings of so learned an Audience as was then before you.

What You add in the next Words, * "That the
 " Governors of EVERY CHURCH are to
 " make use of the *best Lights* they can get, and
 " to have a particular Regard to the Sense of
 " the *Primitive Church*, where it can be had,"
 will do You no Service 'till you can establish a
Criterion to distinguish between the *best Lights*,
 and those who only pretend to be so; for are
 there not Learned Men of all Communion
 who interpret Scripture in a different Manner,
 and claim the *Fathers* to themselves? And have
 you not seen the Learned Men of the *Protestant*
 and *Popish* Communion citing *Fathers* against
Fathers and *Councils* against *Councils*? So that if
 it be necessary that a Power be lodged in some
 Persons to Interpret Scripture, with that Authority
 that their Interpretation *ought* to be submitted
 to, the shortest way is to have recourse to
 an *Infallible living Judge*, who may resolve all
 our Doubts, and instruct us in the true Faith
 without a possibility of being mistaken.

C

Having

Having thus fix'd the *Right* of Interpreting Scripture with that Authority, that their Interpretations *ought* to be submitted to in the Governors of EVERY Church, assisted by the best Lights they can get, and with a particular Regard to the Sense of the Primitive Church where it can be had; You ask, " But are the
 " People oblig'd to submit to such Summaries,
 " or Professions of Faith, who think something
 " to be profess'd in them that is not true?"
 Your Answer to which, if it amounts to any thing, gives up all You had been contending for. " If the Case should be so (say You) that
 " the Governors of the Church * should
 " either decree false Doctrine, or such as is just-
 " ly, and for good Reason to be suspected, 'tis
 " then commendable, and our Duty, or lawful
 " at least not to conform." Here the Authority of the Church is laid aside: The People are allow'd to judge for themselves; and if upon Examination they apprehend their Governors mistaken, they are not to conform: This is all the *Dissenters* from the Establish'd Church contend for; allow them this, without the whole-som Severities of Penal-Laws and Tests, and they are satisfied.

But because this is a Point of great Consequence in our Debate, I must beg you, in your Reply to the Lord Bishop of *Bangor*, to speak out, and tell the People plainly, whether it be as much their Duty to examine the Determinations of their Church-Governors, when they receive them

them, as before they reject them. If it be not^t so, I must confess I have been mistaken in one of^f the first Principles of my Religion; for I have always thought Religion a Matter of Choice, and not to be taken up upon Trust; and that we ought not to profess our Belief of any Summaries of Faith, 'till we perceive their Agreeableness with Scripture. The Noble *Bereans* are commended for not taking the Word even of an *Apostle*, *Acts* xvii. 11. but for searching the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so; and the Apostle *Paul* was so far from exhorting the *Thessalonians* to trust their Church-Governors, that he commands them to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*; 1 *Thess.* v. 21. I can't forbear recommending to You the judicious Remarks of Dr. *Whitby* on this Passage of Scripture, for whose critical Learning, and Acquaintance with the Fathers of the Primitive Church, You can't but have a great Esteem. His Words are these: “ *Note*, That
 “ the Apostle does not here bid the *Guides* of
 “ the Church try all things, and the People hold
 “ fast that which *they* delivered to them, but
 “ gives an Injunction common to all Christians,
 “ having their Senses exercised to discern between Good and Evil; to all who are
 “ obliged to hold fast that which is good, and
 “ not to believe false Prophets, which is a strong
 “ Argument for the Perspicuity and Sufficiency
 “ of Holy Scripture for this Work, and against
 “ the Necessity of a living Judge; for he that
 “ must try all things, must also try the Doctrine

“ of this living Judge; and therefore ’till he has
 “ made this Tryal must not admit his Doctrine
 “ as an Article of Christian Faith; for these
 “ Words plainly teach, that what we must hold
 “ fast must be tryed. *Hearers, saith St. Basil,*
 “ *who are instructed in the Scriptures ought to*
 “ *try those Things spoken by their Teachers, and*
 “ *receive those Doctrines which are conso-*
 “ *nant, and reject those which are alien from*
 “ *the Holy Scriptures, because St. Paul hath*
 “ *said, try all Things and hold fast that which*
 “ *is good.*” The Dr. refers his Reader to several
 other Passages out of *Clemens Alexandrinus,*
Origen, St. Jerom and *Cyril of Alexandria,* to
 the same purpose.

But if all the Fathers had been silent on this
 Head, the Reasonableness of the Thing itself,
 together with the Passages of Scripture I have
 mention’d, are sufficient alone to determine this
 Point: Nay I will venture to add that a blind
 submission to the Dictates of our Governors is
 culpable tho’ they should happen to lead us Right;
 for tho’ we are to pay a due Regard to our Superiors,
 yet we must not give up our Understandings to
 them; but must try their Doctrines by the Stan-
 dard of the Holy Scriptures. If You conceive
 otherwise of this Matter Pray declare it openly
 to the World. Insist upon this the rather be-
 cause You have told us (*p. 24.*) “ That it con-
 “ cerns those who are to obey, whether in Spi-
 “ ritual or Civil Matters, to inform themselves
 “ of their Duty, and consequently of the extent
 “ of the Authority of those set over them, least
 “ they

“ they bring on themselves the Guilt and Punishment of Disobedience, by resisting through a culpable Ignorance, either to *God* or *Cæsar* what is due to them ” but say not one Word throughout Your whole Sermon, of the Obligations they are under to search the Scriptures and compare the Doctrines of their Church with them.

Besides, I have observed the Writers on the side of *Church Authority* have been generally silent on this Head, except the Learned *Dean of Chichester*, who has told us plainly in his late Vindication of the *Corporation Act*,* “ That tho’ the Reformation claim’d the Use of the Scriptures as the undoubted Right of every Christian who was capable of using them, yet they had Sense enough to know, that to leave every Man to make the best of his *Bible* without any farther Direction or Restraint, would naturally tend to Confusion, and fill the Kingdom with all the wild Conceits that Ignorance and Enthusiasm could produce. ” It had been kind in the *Dean* if he had mark’d out the Boundaries, and mention’d the Restraints that the Reformation has laid us under in using our *Bibles*, for to put a Book into the Hands of the People and exhort them to read it with certain Limitations and Restraints which are not fit to be mention’d, is to draw them into a Snare which may be destructive to them: No Wonder if *Some* through Fear have laid aside their *Bibles* as a dangerous Book, and *Others* by making too free with it, have fallen into the wild Conceits

* Page 31.

ceits of *Enthusiasm*: But at whose Door does this lie? Certainly at theirs who know what use People should make of their *Bibles*, and under what Restraints they should read them, but don't think fit to declare 'em openly to the World.

But the Qualifications which you have made necessary to the right understanding the Sense of Scripture, even in important Doctrines of Faith, render it impossible for the common People to judge for themselves at all. For You say, (p. 35, 36) " that there are some Parts of Scripture
 " relating to matters of Faith and upon which
 " the safety of it very much depends, the Sense
 " of which can't be determined without Un-
 " derstanding the Use of Words, and the Art
 " of Criticism, nor without consulting the *Pri-*
 " *mitive* Writers of the Church " You add indeed that these Passages are but few in comparison of others; but yet if our Faith can't be safe without them, the People must always be at Uncertainties, unless they can make themselves easy, with believing, as the Church they happen to be bred up in believes. This is the Doctrine I presume you would establish; a Doctrine which serves equally to establish the Religion of every Country, and will effectually prevent all Heresies, and Schisms among Christians 'till their *Governors* and *Learned Men* quarrel and divide, and then the People must follow their Leaders; not judge of the controversy it self, for that is not in their Power, 'till they have studied the Art of Criticism and consulted the *Primitive Fathers*, but take Part with those whom they shall

shall presume are the wisest and best Governors and will oblige them to nothing but what has a good Foundation in Scripture and Antiquity.

But what a deplorable Condition are the unlearned Laity reduced to by these Principles ! God has given them a *Revelation* of his Will which 'tis not fit for them to Read without certain secret Limitations and Restraints. Here are *Summaries* of Faith to be believed, the Truth of which depends on certain Passages of Scripture, which they can't understand; and *Capital Errors*, which 'tis next to impossible for them to avoid, unless they will shut their Eyes, and rely absolutely on the honesty of their Governors. Can Wise and Good Men believe that this is the Religion of Christ ? That he came down from Heaven to reveal his Gospel to the Wise and Learned Men of this World, and not also to *Babes* ? Surely Sir, it had been more agreeable to the Character of a *Protestant Divine*, and a *Dignitary* of the *Church of England* ; if instead of Preaching up the Doctrine of *Church Authority* You had made use of Your extraordinary Talents to convince the Governors of the *Church of England*, of the Reasonableness and Necessity of acting agreeably to the Judgment of the Reformed Churches, “ who as they acknowledge the Scriptures for “ a perfect Rule, so they agree in declaring “ (p. 36) *that every Thing necessary to Salvation*, is plainly and expressly contained in “ them, or is very clearly deducible from “ them ” but the Principles you have advanced
in

in your Sermon, namely that the Governors of EVERY Church, have a Right to Interpret Scripture with that Authority that their Interpretations *ought* to be submitted to by the People, will lead the *Protestant Churches* back again to *Rome*, for there is no stopping half way: The *Papists* are consistent with themselves, when they forbid their People the use of the *Bible*, because it is above their Capacities, and might occasion their falling into dangerous *Heresies* and *Schisms*: The *Protestants* likewise act agreeably to their Principles, when they allow the common People the free use of the Holy Scriptures, believing them to be a perfect Rule of *Faith* and *Practice* and that *every thing necessary to Salvation* is plainly and expressly contained in them, or very clearly deducible from them; but as for Your *middle way*, which claims the use of the *Bible* for the People, but forbids the reading it without certain Limitations and Restraints; that acknowledges the Scripture to be the Rule of Faith, but maintains that it is impossible to understand it without the Art of Criticism, and consulting the *Primitive Fathers*: In a Word, that asserts the Necessity of a fair and due Examination of the Doctrines of our Superiors before we dissent from them, but encourages a blind Submission, in all that will acquiesce in them; these are such seeming Inconsistencies as I am not able at present to reconcile, and which I beg in Your Reply to the *Bishop* You will be pleased to explain.

I come

I come now to examine that Passage of your Sermon, which relates more immediately to the *Dissenters*. You say (p. 38) “ That if
 “ our Spiritual Governors decree false Doctrine,
 “ or such as is justly and for good Reason to
 “ be suspected, ’tis then our Duty not to con-
 “ form to them ; but it may happen, say
 “ You, that the Governors are in the right ; but
 “ some of their Flock are strongly perswaded
 “ they are not ; must they conform against their
 “ Persuasion ? No. Will their Persuasion justify
 “ their Nonconforming ? No, nor excuse it nei-
 “ ther, unless it be sincere, and no persuasion is
 “ sincere in such a Sense as will excuse a Sepa-
 “ ration, that is not the Result of a fair and due
 “ Examination, and the use of all proper means.
 “ And I think I may without breach of Cha-
 “ rity, suppose that the Persuasions of the seve-
 “ ral Sects that dissent from the *Establish’d*
 “ *Church* are not thus sincere. ” One would
 be apt to conclude from hence that the *Dissen-*
ters differ’d from the *Church* in some *Capital Do-*
ctrines of Faith, (for of such You are here speak-
 ing) whereas You know the main Body of them
 are of the same *Faith* with the Church of *Eng-*
land, and the rest of the Reformed Churches ;
 and have appeared as Zealously in Defence of it,
 as the Clergy of the Church of *England* them-
 selves ; the whole of our difference being
 on the Heads of CHURCH AUTHORITY,
 and CHURCH POLICY. And is it not a
 Breach of Charity to say that no Wise and
 Good Man after a fair Examination can differ
 with You upon these Heads, and think that such

a difference is a sufficient ground of Separation? All the World knows that the Church of *Scotland*, about the Time of the Revolution, rejected the *English Liturgy* and *Discipline*, after they had made tryal of it for above Twenty Years; and are there no sincere Christians among them? None who after a fair and due Examination, and the Use of all proper means might think it their Duty to shake off that *Discipline*, for what they apprehended a better?

But I find the Learned Governors of the Church, are not agreed about the Nature of Sincerity: *You say* that no Persuasion is sincere so as to excuse a Separation that is not the Result of a fair and due Examination and the Use of all proper Means; the Bishop of *Oxford* on the other Hand says that no more is included in the notion of sincerity, than acting agreeably to our present Persuasion: And his Reasoning on this Head may possibly convince You, that Your Charge against the *Dissenters* is both Unchristian and Uncharitable: His Words are these.

“ Will *this Writer* condemn all Men as Infincere, who have not done all that is here required? If he will not, then a Man may be sincere, who is defective as to some Part of it; and consequently, the whole cannot be included in the general Notion of Sincerity: If he will so condemn them, he must be far more liberal in dispensing his Sentences of Damnation, than the Church of *Rome* her self has been; for to say nothing of the rest of the World: If all this be implied in the Notion

“ tion of Sincerity, how few are those who
 “ adhere either to the Church of *Rome*, or any
 “ other Sect of Christians, can shew a just Title
 “ to this Virtue? It may be in a whole Congre-
 “ gation there will often be found scarce One
 “ Sincere Person in the Rigid Sense of the
 “ Word.--For my own Part (says the Bishop)
 “ I am inclined to think that sincerity often im-
 “ plies no more serious Consideration than may
 “ justly be comprehended in the Word *Persua-*
 “ *sion*, and that as the Person is *unsincere* who
 “ speaks or acts otherwise than he is persuad-
 “ ed; so on the contrary, He may be termed *Sim-*
 “ *cere*, whose Words and Actions have a perfect
 “ Agreement with his inward *Persuasion*, especial-
 “ ly when this *Persuasion* is so firm and rooted
 “ as to leave no Room for doubt and Hesitation. *

You see his Lordship thinks Sincerity to be nothing else but *An acting agreeably to our Inward Persuasions* which You have Charity enough to believe the Dissenters do; If his Lordship's Account of Sincerity therefore be right, we are acquitted at once, unless You say that more is necessary to make a sincere *Dissenter* that a sincere *Churchman*, or that *my* separate Congregation are more inexcusable for acting according to their *inward Persuasion*, than Your Parishoners of *Barnes*, which I am afraid You will not easily prove.

D 2

But

* *Bishop of Oxford's Defence of his Charge to the Clergy* p. 23, 24.

But to support your Charge of *Insincerity* against the several Sects of *Dissenters*, You say you will put the Proof of it upon a very short Issue: "Take the Persons assembled in any one Meeting-House, and enquire how many of them have seriously look'd into the *Common Prayer-Book*, to see whether or no they can conform to the Use of it." Well suppose we should put the Proof on this Issue, and grant for the present that the Majority of Dissenters in their several Meeting-Houses have not examined the *Common Prayer Book* so carefully as they ought: How then will You justify Your own Separation from the Church of *Rome*? Suppose a *Priest* of that Communion should stand up and say, I think I may without breach of Charity suppose, that the Persuasions of the several Sects of Protestants that dissent from the Church of *Rome*, and particularly the Church of *England* are not sincere, and I'll put the Proof on a very short Issue; *Take the Persons assembled in any one Church in England, and enquire how many of them have ever seriously look'd into the Mass-Book, to see whether or no they can conform to the Use of it.* If the Dean of *Worcester* thinks the MAIN BODY of them sincere in any other Sense, *i. e.* so as to have used the best means of Information they could get let him declare it to the World upon express Terms, or let him acknowledge that the sincerity of the *Protestant Dissenters* in their Separation from the Establish'd Church, stands upon the very same Foot with the Separation of the Church of *England* from

from that of *Rome*. If you say the Case is now altered from what it was at the Reformation; I answer, 'tis the same with the *Dissenters*; for the MAIN BODY of the present *Dissenters* were neither born nor baptized into the Church of *England*, and therefore, according to your own Principles, ought not to depart from the Religion of their Governors, till they are convinced of the Unlawfulness of it, after a fair and due Examination, and the Use of all proper Means.

But I will venture to add one thing more; that there are more *Dissenters* who have look'd into the *Common-Prayer-Book* to see if they could like it, than Churchmen that have look'd either into the *Mass-Book* or *Directory*: More *Dissenters* who have made Trial of the Service of the Church, and upon due Consideration, thought it their Duty to worship God in a more plain and simple Manner, than Churchmen who have been either at a *Meeting*, or a *Mass-house*: What else could induce them to be at the Expence of a Separation, attended with the Insults and Reproaches of the Multitude? The *Dissenters* are Men as well as their Neighbours, and some of them Persons of Character and Esteem in the World: Now to imagine that such Men should choose to be in Disgrace, meerly out of Humour, or that they should sacrifice their Interest, their Reputation, the Capacity of serving their Country, and the Prospect of Preferments, which they might otherwise have a claim to, to the *Practicings* of their *Teachers*, is to sink the Character of the dissenting Laity too low, and to do
more

more Honour to their *Teachers* than they really deserve.

The Lord Bishop of *Bangor* in his late Answer to your Sermon, has observed very justly, “ That
 “ your Reflection on the *Dissenters* in this Passage, is more than was ever said of the whole
 “ Body of them, by the bitterest Enemies they
 “ ever had. “ Upon which you complain very loudly of his Lordship for representing you as *Unchristian and Uncharitable to tender Consciences*; but what do you offer to remove the Charge? Why instead of producing your Authorities to confute his Lordship’s Observation, after the Rehearsal of some few Articles of your Belief, you insinuate to the World, that his Lordship must have just the same Opinion of his Friends the *Nonconformists* with yourself; that is, that he must think them ALL inexcusable before God, as having NONE of them made Use of all proper Means according to their several Abilities for their Instruction and Information. How you could drop such an Expression as this, after you had read his Lordship’s Remarks on this Passage of your Sermon, is very surprizing! I can’t but observe, how artfully you have endeavour’d to evade the Force of his Lordship’s Remarks, by a Change of the Expression: In your Sermon the Charge of Insincerity is laid against the several Sects of *Dissenters*, without Distinction or Reserve; but in your Postscript ’tis thus, “ If his
 “ Lordship thinks the MAIN BODY of them
 “ *sincere*, &c. let him acknowledge it in express
 “ Terms. Here I confess is the Dawning of a little
 Charity,

Charity, some few may possibly escape by Virtue of this Distinction; and you are willing to hope, in another Place, that both God and Man will make great Allowances to the MAIN BODY: I shall only observe upon this Occasion, that it seems an unfair Question to ask his Lordship what he thinks of a Thing he can never come to the Knowledge of; the Sincerity of Men being known only to God and themselves; or to put him on declaring whether the *Dissenters* have used the best Means of Information they could get, the *Main Body* of whom he neither is, nor can be acquainted with: *Charity*, says the Apostle, *thinketh no evil, but believeth all things, and hopeth all things*; you ought therefore, as well as his Lordship, to think us sincere, till you know the contrary, which I am satisfied you cannot easily do.

I beg leave now to make a few Remarks on the Remainder of your Postscript, as far as it relates to the *Dissenters*: You declare (p. 47.) “that you rejoyce in the Indulgence granted to
“tender Consciences, and that you are against
“Persecution, but do not include in your Notion
“of its *negative Discouragement*:” I wish you had declared further, how far these negative Discouragements are to extend, for late Experience has convinced us, that if God in his righteous Judgment should ever give up the *Dissenters* into the Hands of the Favourers of Church Authority, they would soon be reduced to the Condition of the *Gibeonites* in the Land of *Canaan*, be made *Hewers of Wood, and Drawers of Water*;
Negative

Negative Discouragements are as real Persecution, as the most Positive Punishments you can inflict, because they deprive Men of their natural Rights for Conscience sake. Why are you against the Magistrates putting Men to Death for Religion? But because it is usurping upon the Prerogative of God, who is the only Lord of Conscience, and at whose Tribunal alone we are to stand or fall in this Matter: And is not the disabling Men from serving their King and Country, not for any Crimes against the State, but purely for their different Sentiments in Religion, a punishing them for their Consciences? I am of Opinion, therefore at present, that his MAJESTY has a Right to the Duty and Service of all his Subjects, who are willing to give Security for their peaceable Submission to his Government; that the *Protestant Dissenters* love their King and Country as well as the Establish'd Church; that therefore they ought to lie under no civil Incapacities, or negative Discouragements; tho' it may be I may alter my Sentiments, *when you have produced all the Writers of the Primitive Church on your Side.* *

“ You think the Causes of the Dissenters Separation unreasonable and unjustifiable, but I appeal to all the World, whether they appear to be so upon the Issue you have put them; for we separate neither from the Doctrine of the Primitive Church nor its Discipline, our Doctrine is the same with yours, and the Discipline of the Church

Church of *England* being both Human and Modern, it can be no Crime to dissent from it. If the *Discipline* which we exercise in our separate Congregations be not *Primitive*, 'tis what we apprehend to be so, and when we are convinced to the contrary, we shall be ready to change it for a better; in the mean time we act agreeably to our inward Perswasions, and according to the *best Light* we can get out of the Word of God. We judge for ourselves, and exhort our People to do so: We claim no Dominion over their Faith, nor *Right* to interpret Scripture for them with that Authority, that our Interpretations *ought* to be submitted to before they see the Evidence of them, but bid them search the Scriptures, to see whether things are so or not: We are for separating as much as possible *the Traditions of Men, and the Rudiments of this World* from our Holy Religion, and reducing it to the *Simplicity that is in Christ*, and yet at the same time, *we are for rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars, as well as to God the things that are Gods*; we disclaim all Imposition and Persecution, or the annexing civil Penalties to the Spiritual Censures of the Church; we force no Man into our Communion, nor detain him in it, when he apprehends it either his Duty, or for his greater Edification to withdraw. And where is the Unreasonableness of such a Conduct as this?

But you add, " that all who can conform to
" the Church ought to do so; I think, on the
contrary, that all *Christians* without Regard to
the Laws of Men, ought to conform to the

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Doctrine

Doctrine and Discipline of Christ and his Apostles, as far as it can be known ; for let a Church be reduced to what it was in the Apostles Time, and the Scripture will furnish us with sufficient Directions for the Government of it, without the Assistance of the *Canon-Law*.

You take upon you indeed to say, “ That a
 “ Divine Revelation is not *necessary* for the Ap-
 “ pointment of all the Parts of External Wor-
 “ ship and Discipline ;” but if one may judge
 of the Necessity of it, by the Follies and Ex-
 travagancies that the Church of *Rome*, and
 some *others* have run into from your Principles,
 it will appear to be of very great Importance : But to prove your Assertion, you say ’tis
 PLAIN “ St. Paul himself, in some of the Dire-
 “ ctions he gives, grounds them not upon any
 “ Command of the Lord, but upon the C U-
 “ stom of the Church, 1 Cor. xi. 16. *But if*
 “ *any Man seem to be contentious, We have no*
 “ *such Custom, neither the Church of God.*”
 But these Words of the Apostle are so far from
 your Purpose, that they prove the direct con-
 trary to what you would infer ; for your Argu-
 ment stands thus : Because the Apostle appeal’d
 to the CUSTOM of the Churches, *therefore*
 Church-Governors are at Liberty to introduce
 what New CUSTOMS they shall think most
 expedient, and for Edification ; whereas the
Apostles Words are an Injunction against all *In-*
novations in Divine Worship ; he would have
 the *Corinthians* abide by those *Customs*, which
 Himself and the Rest of the *Apostles* had esta-
 blish’d

bliss'd in all the Churches, and not admit of any Alterations: That this is his Meaning, is evident from his Introduction to this Discourse, (Verse 2.) *Now I praise Your Brethren, that You remember Me in all things, and keep the Ordinances as I delivered them to You* (Τὰς παραδόσεις) *the Traditions*, whether they were written, or unwritten, is of no great Importance; but they were such as were immediately delivered to them from the Mouth of an *Apostle*, and were to be kept AS they were delivered to them without the least Alteration or Addition, and so no doubt were the CUSTOMS here refer'd to; and when the *Romanists*, or any others, can make good this, of any of their *Traditions* or *Customs*, from Authentick Testimony, the Dissenters will be ready to comply with them.

You add further, "That 'tis DEMONSTRABLE
" the Scripture is not a perfect Rule in these
" Cases, because the Apostle says, *The rest will*
" *I set in order when I come. **" And again,
" *For this Cause left I thee in Crete, that thou*
" *shouldest set in order the Things that are want-*
" *ing. †*" As if because the *Apostles* had a Power
to make Laws, and give Directions for the
well ordering of the Church; therefore *All*
Church-Governors may assume to themselves the
same Power to the End of the World; for from
this DEMONSTRATION You conclude, "That
" *Governors are at Liberty to do what they judge*
" *most expedient, and most for Edification, by*
E 2 "virtue

* 1 Cor. xi. 44.

† Tit. i. 5.

“ virtue of that known Rule, which is not so
“ much an Apostolical Precept as the Dictate of
“ common Sense ; *Let all things be done decently, and in Order.* ” Never were Words so abused to serve the Purposes of Arbitrary Power in the Church, and give Colour to the Follies and Extravagancies of some of the worst of Men, as these have been ; the *Apostle* did not think it decent for Women to speak in the Church, and therefore forbids it : He was apprehensive that two or three Persons standing up to speak together in their Publick Assemblies, might breed Confusion, and therefore advises for Order sake, that One should speak at a Time, and the Rest be silent ; but upon this Passage of Scripture, the Church of *Rome* has built all the gawdy Pomp and Ceremony which attends her Constitution ; and by this very same known Rule, the Dean of *Worcester* will infer, We must be of the Religion of the State where we live : At *Rome* we must be Catholicks, and at *Geneva* Presbyterians, because the Governors of those Churches think their several Constitutions most decent and orderly ; or most expedient, and for Edification. What is become of your Zeal for Primitive Discipline ! I thought we should have heard that it was the indispensable Duty of the *Governors* of the Church to restore the Primitive Discipline, as far as it could be known, and the Peoples Duty to conform to it ; but I find 'tis alike to you what Governors the Church has, and what Discipline they appoint ; the Governors of the Church are whom
the

the Magistrate shall appoint ; “ and the *Dictate of*
“ *common Sense* tells us, they may do what they
“ judge most expedient, and for Edification, in
“ the External of Worship ; and that their Flocks
“ are bound to obey and submit to them ” : These
things, *Sir*, you have dictated, but I leave the
World to judge, whether you have produced any
convincing Argument to support them.

I confess indeed you have a fine Manner of
bearing down your Adversary with *high Words*,
which amount to nothing, and of engrossing all
Reason and *Common Sense* to your self, and
those of your Mind ; for in one place, you say,
that what is of such a Nature as can't be proved
to be true to a REASONABLE MAN ought not to
be imposed ; and here if we don't allow the
Governors, an unlimited Power to do what they
judge expedient in Points of external Worship
and Discipline, We must give up our COM-
MON SENSE : The Dissenters are loth to differ
with you, *Sir*, at so great an Expence ; and
therefore only beg leave to ask two Questions
under this Head. *First*, Whether, supposing the
Scripture be not a perfect Rule in these Cases, the
People, as well as the Governors of the Church
are not at Liberty, in Points of External Worship
and Discipline, to judge what is most expedient,
and most for their own Edification. And, *Se-*
condly, Whether the lodging such an unlimited
Power as you contend for, in the Hands of Church-
Governors, may not lead us to all the Superstitions
of the Papacy ; “ For if Convenience or De-
“ cency gives Right, a Plenitude of Power, a
“ Right

“ Right not only to meddle in Spirituals, but in
 “ all other Matters, *in Ordine ad Spiritualia*, In-
 “ falibility and Persecution will soon be thought
 “ not only convenient, but necessary Claims,
 “ and that to the best of Purposes, to preserve
 “ Unity, and root out Heresie.” They are
 your own Words, and conclude as strongly
 against an arbitrary imposing Power in Modes
 of Worship, as in Summaries of Faith. Till
 therefore you can offer some better Proof for
 the unlimited Commission of Church-Gover-
 nors, separate from the People, to determine
 the Externals of Worship and Discipline;
 You must excuse us if we don’t own their Au-
 thority.

Having thus declared your Sentiments of the
Dissenters, and their Separation, you are pleas’d
 to give us a Taste of your Charity, “ but I am will-
 “ ing to believe (*say you*) they, most of them Act
 “ according to their present Perswasion;” Well,
 this is as much as you can say of the Laity of the
 Church of *England*, and enough in the Bishop
 of *Oxford’s* Judgment to denominate us sincere.
 “ And you hope both God and Man will make
 “ great Allowances to this in such as are *illite-*
 “ *rate* and *uneducated*.” This likewise is kinder
 than any thing you have said of us in your Sermon,
 for there you left us all without Excuse, to the
 uncovenanted Mercies of God, but here you
 hope *great Allowances* will be made for the *illi-*
terate and uneducated in our several Congrega-
 tions; But why is your Charity confin’d to *the*
illiterate and uneducated? Is there no Mercy for
 their

their *Teachers*, or for those few who have had the Advantage of a learned Education? Is it impossible for a learned Man to separate from your Communion, on the Account of *Church Authority and Discipline*, and yet be sincere? O Uncharitableness! In the Preface to your Sermon, you make great Allowances for the Errors of the Learned: " You cannot think it equitable in the Governors of the Church to take the
" utmost Advantage of severe Laws against in-
" nocent, well-meaning People, while they con-
" tinue such; much less to call in the secular
" Arm to oppress and crush under its Weight
" *virtuous and learned Men*, for the Mistakes
" their disinterested Pursuits of Truth and Know-
" ledge may happen to lead them into. " If then there are any virtuous and learned Men among the *Dissenters*, who have fallen into Error thro' a disinterested Pursuit of Truth, you will not think it equitable to crush them: And as for the rest, *that is*, for such as are Immoral and Jesuitical, whose Pursuits after Truth are govern'd by Pride, Passion, and worldly Interest, when they can be proved to be so, we ask no favour.

But the Reason of your unkind treatment of the *Dissenting Ministers* may be gathered from your next Words* in which you insinuate that the Peoples separating from the Establish'd Church with all the Mischiefs that follow upon it, is owing to the influence their *false Teachers*

* p. 48.

ers have on their weak Minds; the *Dissenting Teachers* therefore being the Authors of the Separation and of all the Mischiefs that have risen from thence both to the Church and State, are here exempted from the Mercy of God and Man. But how does it appear that they are *false Teachers*? When the MAIN BODY of them adhere strictly to the Doctrine of the Reformation, as express'd in the Articles of the Church of *England*. Is it because they are Intruders into their *Office*? Without entring into the Argument, 'tis easy to prove their *Commission* to be as Divine and Apostolical, as that which arises only from the Civil Magistrate. Will You take it upon You to say that they teach their People what they don't believe themselves? This I am afraid would be entring too far into the Heart; or can You prove that the *Dissenting Teachers* have spirited up their People to Sedition or Rebellion against the civil Magistrate? We all know there hath been a set of *Clergy-Men* in the Church who have been practicing on the Minds of his Majesties good Subjects, and endeavouring to make them uneasy under the gentle Administration of the best of Kings, whose Sermons have been fill'd with treasonable Reflections against their Superiors, and whose Influence on the Mob had like very lately to have been fatal both to the Church and State; but the *Dissenters* have had no Part in this. What Mischief then have the *Dissenting Teachers* done either to Church or State? Have they robb'd the Church of her Revenues? Don't their Hearers
continue

continue to pay their *Tiths*, their *Parish-Dues*, and *Offerings*: Nay don't some of them contribute liberally to their Lecturers? And have they not joyn'd heartily with the Church against their common Enemies, the *Roman Catholicks* on proper Occasions? The *Dissenters* have suffered a great many Mischiefs from the Church, by Fines, Imprisonments, and by the Church's taking the utmost Advantage of severe Laws against Innocent well meaning People; but I don't believe it is in any of their Hearts to make Reprizals if it were in their Power, I am sure at least we teach them the contrary, according to our Saviour's Command, *Bless them that Curse You, do good to them that Hate You, and pray for them which despitefully use You and Persecute You.* And as to the *State*, the *Protestant Dissenters* love the *English Constitution*, and have dared to stand up in Defence of it when it was in apparent Danger: Who were truer Friends to the Revolution and the Protestant Succession in the Family of his present Majesty than the Body of *Protestant Dissenters*? If they would have fallen in with the Measures of a late Ministry, who were betraying the Kingdom into the Hands of a *Popish Pretender*, they might have avoided those *Marks of Infamy* that were put upon them, by the *Occasional*, the *Schism*, and some other Bills; I am sure the *Protestant Dissenters* hold no Principles inconsistent with their Allegiance to their King and Country. They Pray heartily for his Majesty's Person and Government, they

take the Oaths, pay Taxes, Strengthen the Hands of his Majesties Friends, and and would be glad to serve him in all Civil and Military Employments if they might be allowed. Nay I'll venture to say, that the *Dissenting Teachers* have been so far from prejudicing the Church or State that they have been serviceable to both. They have serv'd the Church by laying the Inferior Clergy under a Necessity of Preaching once or twice every *Lord's-Day* in their Churches, on pain of loosing their Parishioners to the *Meetings*, and they have served the State by joining their Strength to those who have been for maintaining the true *English Constitution* in the worst of Times; and one may easily foretell that when the Authority of the Church shall prevail so far as to destroy Liberty of Conscience, Liberty and Property in the State will not long survive. Tell the World therefore plainly what Mischief these *Dissenting Teachers* have done either to their Country or Primitive Christianity, and what Crimes the Learned and Educated of their Congregations are guilty of, that You cannot so much as *hope that either God or Man will make any allowances for them.*

But You add, " That since great Mischiefs
 " have arisen both to Church and State from
 " the *Dissenting Laity's* being easily practic'd
 " upon by *false Teachers*: You therefore think
 " the Government has a right to make such
 " Laws as are necessary to keep turbulent Spi-
 " rits quiet, and to preserve our Religious as
 " well as civil Establishment. " The Government
 has

has certainly a right to keep the Peace, and not only to make Laws for this purpose, but to put them in Execution; 'tis owing to the want of this, that so many turbulent Spirits have dared to disturb the Peace of his Majesty's Government, by dabling with Politicks in the Pulpit, and instead of Preaching the Gospel of Christ have filled the Peoples Heads with false Notions of *Divine Right, Indefeasible, Hereditary Succession, &c.* as if it was of more Importance to make them good Statesmen, than good Christians; this is the Spring of all the Mischiefs that have arisen both to the Church and State of late Years: If the Ministers of the Gospel had kept within the Limits of their Commission, Preaching Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and recommending the Graces and Virtues of a Christian Life, the People had been quiet, but since there are now, and always have been such *Turbulent Spirits* as these in the World, I think, with You, the Government has as Right to make such Laws as will keep them quiet.

But I am at a loss to understand who those *Turbulent Spirits* among the *Dissenters* are, that You would have the Government enact Laws against; Is it their *Teachers*? If they Preach Sedition or Treason, I agree with you they ought to be punish'd: Or is it their People? If they likewise disturb the Publick Peace by Riots or Tumults, let them have no Favour; but if by *Turbulent Spirits*, You mean such as take the Liberty to Preach and Write against the absolute Authority of the Church in Matters of Faith; to con-

vince the People that 'tis their Duty to make the best of their *Bibles*, both as a Rule of Life, and a Standard of *Truth*; to exhort them to hold fast their Christian Liberty, and not trust their Salvation in the Hands of their Governors: If these are the *Turbulent Spirits* You speak of, 'tis my Opinion they ought to lie under no Discouragement; for if these Doctrines are not true, I am sure they will hurt none but such as are for assuming such an Authority to themselves, as neither God nor Nature design'd them for: God never gave *the Clergy* a Commission to set in Judgment upon their Neighbour's Consciences; nor does Nature seem to have form'd them for it, for when they have got into the Saddle (I blush when I Write it) they have been most *unnatural* and *cruel* to all such as have come within the Verge of their Authority; as is notorious to all who are in the least acquainted with Church History; so that if there must be such a Thing as Church Authority in *England* I shall always Pray that it may be under the Check and Controll of the civil Magistrate; tho' I must confess, for my own Part, I should be glad to see all Parties of Christians disarmed of all *civil Power*; for Penal Laws can do no service to Religion; they may make Men *Hypocrites* and *Atheists*, but can have no influence on Conscience, as is visible from the Example of the new Converts in *France*: If the Magistrate would but keep the Peace, restrain Immorality and Prophaneness and protect every dutiful

ful and loyal Subject in the free and full enjoyment of his Conscience, all Reasonable Men would be satisfied; and as for the rest make as severe Laws as you please for the keeping of them quiet.

But lest this should look like *Persecution*, You are pleas'd to conclude with a Passage which carries the Face of a great deal of Goodness, but means nothing at Bottom. "Tho' the Government has a right to make Laws to keep *Turbulent Spirits* quiet, yet You should wish that such Laws might always lie *Dormant* and that no Person *Protestant* or *Papist* might feel more of them than if they were never made." That is, You wish the Terror of the Laws alone, may reduce Men to the Unity of the Church without giving the Magistrate an Occasion to put them in Execution; Wonderful Civility! The Fathers of the Holy Inquisition will go thus far with You, they'll wish their Laws may lie *dormant*, that is that Men would abide in the *Catholick Faith*, and not expose themselves to the Penalty of them; Nay, when they deliver an *Heretick* over to the *Secular Power* they beseech the Magistrate in the Bowels of Christ to be kind to him; but do they mean any real Favour to the unhappy Criminal by all this? No, they are sure the Law will be executed with the utmost Rigour. Now if Your kind *Wish* to the Dissenters amount to no more than this, that You would have them keep out of the Reach of the *Spiritual Courts*, that so they might feel no more
of

of the Weight of the Laws, than if they were never made, they are to thank you for nothing; and if this be not the Meaning of it, 'tis hard to reconcile it to common Sense; for can any wise Man wish that Laws which the Magistrate has a Right to make, and which are apparently for the Publick Good, should lie dormant, and be no more felt by Offenders, than if they were never made?

Give the *Protestant Dissenters* therefore leave to wish rather, that there may be no Penal Laws, nor Civil Discouragements on the Account of different Sentiments in Religion at all; if any such are in being, it will be in vain to wish they may lie *dormant*, for Men in Power will never want Tools to put them in Execution, and such who will think they are doing God Service all the while: There were some Clergy-Men in the Reign of K. *Charles II.* as good-natur'd as your self, who were not for taking the utmost Advantage of severe Laws against innocent People, who met together in a peaceable Manner, to worship God according to their Consciences; but was it possible for them to stem the Tide? No, the Church had the Law on her side, and the *Spiritual Courts* having tasted the Sweet of such Prosecutions, spirited up Informers from among the Scum of the People, to the Ruin of many Hundreds of honest Families: The same Golden Age of Church Power was returning apace in the last Years of the Reign of her late Majesty Queen ANNE, when every Session of Parliament almost produced a Penal Law against the Dissenters,

ters, and tho' the Death of the Queen, and the Accession of his PRESENT MAJESTY to the Throne, who began his Auspicious Reign with a noble Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, one would have thought, should have laid those Laws asleep; yet they were executed in their Rigour against the Dissenters in some Parts of the Country to the very last. Nor can we ever expect it should be otherwise, for Men will be always fond of shewing their Power, especially when 'tis attended with Advantage and Gain: The *Clergy* indeed profess to be disengag'd from this World, and to be influenc'd in their judicial Proceedings, purely by Compassion to the Souls of Men; and if one might take their Character from the Relation they stand in to the *Meek and Compassionate Saviour of Mankind*, we must conclude them to be the most kind and good-natur'd People in the World; but I know not how it has happen'd, that they have not answer'd their Character; for the History of past Ages has abundantly convinced us, that there is less Mercy to be expected from a *Spiritual Court*, than from the *Courts of Common Law*; so that the Dissenters can't but wish, that All Fines and Forfeitures, Corporal Punishments, and even Negative Discouragements for Conscience sake, may be taken away: But if this cannot be obtain'd, but they must still be expos'd to Temporal Inconveniencies, on the Account of their Religion, they then wish that they may rather fall into the Hands of the Laity, than into the Hands of the Clergy.

You

You are too well acquainted with the History of the Church to be ignorant of the Abuse that was made of Church Power among our selves, towards the Middle of the last Century, when People were summoned into the *High Commission Court*, and *Star-Chamber*, examined by an Oath *ex Officio*, fined and imprisoned after a most arbitrary Manner, for not obeying the Bishops Injunctions, insomuch that the Parliament laid hold of the first Opportunity to abolish those Courts. Again, when the Kingdom was in View of a *Popish* Successor, towards the latter End of the Reign of K. *Charles* IId. the Legislature repeal'd the Act call'd *Breve de Hæretico Comburendo*, which had lain *dormant* for above One Hundred Years, not thinking it safe to leave themselves and their Posterity to the Mercy of their *Spiritual Governors*, who might, one time or other, apprehend it necessary to put such a Law in Execution, for the keeping turbulent Spirits quiet. No wise Government will trust a Body of Subjects, with a Power which they wish they may never put in Execution; and I am willing to hope, that the Experience of the last Age has convinc'd us, that Penal-Laws on the Account of Religion are good for nothing, but to produce *Envyings, Strife, Confusions, and every evil Work*. The Church of *England*, I am sure, can stand in no Need of any more Laws for her Security, while her Influence on the People is so great, as to awe the very Government itself; but some Gentlemen

men will never be satisfied, nor allow the Church to be in flourishing Circumstances, 'till she has shaken off her Dependance on the State, and is arm'd with *Power* to crush at her Pleasure all that shall dare to dispute her Injunctions: I am far from envying the Church her Possessions, nor do I bear ill Will to any Man's Person, but I hope God of his Infinite Mercy, will never deliver us up into the Hands of Men who claim an Authority over Conscience, who call the Laws of the Church the Laws of God, and will bind them on the People not only on pain of Corporal Punishment, but of the Favour of God and eternal Salvation.

I have thus considered the several Articles of your Declaration with Regard to the *Dissenters*, which put together are as odd a Jumble of Principles as I ever met with. You have no ill Will to the Persons of the Dissenters, but are desirous they should be oppress'd with Negative Discouragements. You think the Causes of their Separation unreasonable and unjustifiable, and yet upon the Issue you have put them, they are just the same with the Separation of the Church of *England* from *Rome*. You hope both God and Man, will make great Allowances to the *Illiterate* and *Uneducated*; but as for those who study the Controversy, and make use of all proper Helps for their Instruction and Information, if they separate from the *Church*, you have no Hopes of Mercy for them. You think that more is necessary to make a sincere Dissenter, than a sincere Church-Man. In a

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Word,

Word, You declare that the Magistrate has a Right to make Laws, to keep turbulent Spirits quiet, and to preserve our Religious and Civil Establishment; but wish at the same time that they may may lie *dormant*, that is, either that the Terror of the Laws alone, may reduce *Dissenters* to the Church; or if it does not, yet that neither Protestants nor Papists may feel more of the Weight of them, than if they were never made; which is such a Compliment upon the Legislature, as is not easie to be paralel'd.

In this Light you are willing to appear to the whole World, whether it be to your Advantage, must be left to the Judgment of your *Readers*. The Cause you have undertaken to defend needs all the Supports you are able to give it; and I am willing to believe you can say more for it than the Ablest of your Predecessors, because you are content that your whole *Reputation for Learning should stand and fall with your Sermon*. The *Dissenters* must not think it hard to be despised and trampled upon, when Persons of the highest Order in the Church of *England*, if they differ from you, are treated only as *Pretenders to Learning and Argument*; but a Zeal for the Church I find will give a Man a Dispensation for Decency and good Manners: However, if you are able to prove the present Bishops of the Church of *England* to be the Successors of the Apostles in an uninterrupted Line; the present Establishment to be Scriptural or Apostolical; or that our Saviour has given an unlimited Commission to the Governors of EVERY Church to make

Reverend Dr. H A T E.

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make *Summaries of Faith*, and determine the *Externals of Worship and Discipline* with that Authority, that the People *are obliged* to submit to them, before they examine or approve of them, you will then convert the *Main Body* of the *Dissenters*; but till then, you must excuse us, if we think the Causes of our Separation both -reasonable and justifiable. I am,

April 4th.
1720.

Reverend S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

Daniel Neal.



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